

NOTICE.

We must ask the indulgence of our readers for postponing this week the *Cyclopædia* of the New Building-Act, which arises from the indisposition of its author.

The Builder.

NO. XC.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1844.



AMONG the many subjects which have occupied our thoughts, but which time and space have not permitted us to follow during the present year, is that of fire-proof construction: we can, indeed, hardly undertake to go into the matter before next year, but we publish the following letter, which we have received upon that which is not merely an important branch of architecture, but which is, indeed, legitimate architecture itself.

SIR,—The other day, in looking over some of the former numbers of *THE BUILDER*, I observed in No. 30 your leading article was upon "Fire-proof Buildings;" since that time I believe very little notice has been taken of that important subject in your journal; now, Sir, will you allow me to suggest that I think you would be conferring a great favour upon the building community at large, if you would become the vehicle by which some one of your numerous correspondents who would not think it too much trouble would send correct plans and sections, likewise a detailed account, of any fire-proof building at present existing; or if that should be considered inconvenient, probably some talented individual might be found kind enough to forward you a plan of his own on this most important, and at the same time badly understood subject.

If your own views of the case should at all correspond with the ideas of your humble petitioner, and this letter be deemed sufficient for the furthering of this good cause, please to give publicity to it.

A sincere well-wisher,

Union-street, Borough, G. M.
October 16th, 1844.

Some approaches are indeed being made towards fire-proof construction in various places, and some buildings have been executed, the construction of which has been guided by that intention; but, on the whole, as little has been done to render our buildings permanent against the ravages of fire, as against those of moisture and frost.

The roofs of the Houses of Parliament are being formed of metal instead of wood, and the country may be congratulated upon this circumstance, and may bless the wisdom which directed such a precaution; but the Royal Exchange, relative to which such daily panegyrics appear, and which has repeatedly been declared to be fire-proof, is no more so than a tar-barrel, or a gunpowder firkin; and the huge masses of timber in its roofs and floors would, in a single night, repeat the havoc which destroyed its predecessor; the very ceiling of the merchants' piazza, about the painting of which the public has heard so

much, will, most probably within a hundred years, "try by fire," and overthrow in a few hours every pier around its court, as ignition played at skittles with the columns around the court of the former Exchange and won the game, leaving none standing before the bow of flame which she rolled at them; blither and thither were they all staggered, as easily as the strong man overthrew the pillars, and as in that moment came down the house of Dagon, as easily was the merchants' house of pride reduced to atoms and fragments of disjointed stones.

This part of the error might have been avoided simply by the effect of a little correct architectural feeling; if, instead of in making only the paltry flat plaster ceiling (which will be bacon-dried in ten years, and which is a species of external decoration wholly unsuited to the climate of England, and to the carbonized atmosphere of her cities), the same expense had been incurred in honourably covering the piazza with legitimate, scientific, architectural, fire-proof vaulting, bearing its own ornaments, in solid form, as all true external architecture in England must; and surviving time, accident, neglect, and violence.

Those who have managed the erection of this building, it will be found, have travelled almost as widely as possible from caution.

S. B.

NEW METROPOLITAN BUILDING-ACT.

REPORT OF A COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE GENERAL SESSION OF THE PEACE, AUGUST 15, 1844.

1. To examine and consider into what districts the new portion of an area pointed out by the Act within the jurisdiction of the court might be conveniently divided, and whether any, and what, alterations might be expedient in the districts subsisting and appointed under the former Building-Act; and to communicate with the Home Office, and all other authorities, on the subject, at their discretion; and report thereon to the Court, who might then consider such matter and report—and forthwith determine thereon. And,
2. To revise the present standing orders of the Court as to District Surveyors, and to consider what arrangements might be most conveniently made for obtaining the consents required by the Act from the Home Office; and to submit such revised rules to the Court, at their next meeting, for consideration and for adoption, if approved by the Court.

The committee so appointed perceived—

1. That the new Act, as to the districts and officers to be appointed in pursuance thereof, was in come into operation on September 1; and, as to buildings and other matters, on January 1, 1845. (S. 1.)

2. That (s. 3.) the operation in regard to localities was to be extended beyond the boundaries of the former Act (limited to the bills of mortality and the parishes of St. Marylebone, St. Pancras, and St. Luke, Chelsea) to an area including all places lying on the north side or left bank of the river Thames, within the exterior boundaries of the parishes of Fulham, Hammersmith, Kensington, Paddington, Hampstead, Hornsey, Tottenham, St. Pancras, Islington, Stoke Newington, Hackney, Stratford-le-Bow, Bromley, Poplar, and Shadwell; and to all such part of the parish of Chelsea as lies north of the parish of Kensington; and to all places lying within 200 yards from the exterior boundary of the district thereby defined, except the eastern part of the boundary bounded by the river Lea: so that the enlarged area would extend to the parishes of

Fulham, Hammersmith, Kensington, Hampstead, Hornsey, Tottenham, Stoke Newington, and Bromley, not being included in the former Act, and as to which, therefore, no districts or district surveyors had been heretofore appointed.

3. That it should be lawful for the justices of the peace for this county and the city and liberties of Westminster, at their General Quarter Sessions, respectively, or any adjourn-

ment thereof, with reference to their county and city and liberties, and they are thereby empowered, but subject nevertheless to the consent of one of her Majesty's Secretaries of State, to appoint the districts to which the respective places within their jurisdiction should belong for the purposes of this Act; and to unite, enlarge, and alter such districts for the more convenient distribution of the business. (S. 64.) And that it should be lawful for the said justices, in their General Quarter Sessions respectively, or any adjournment thereof, with reference to their respective counties, and they are required, but subject nevertheless to the consent of one of her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, to nominate and appoint as surveyors such and so many discreet persons, of the full age of thirty years, and properly educated and skilled in the art and practice of building, as the said justices should think fit. But that the present surveyors (s. 70) should be continued in office; and that all surveyors thereafter appointed should be subject to a previous examination as to their practical qualifications by a Board of Examiners nominated by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests (s. 66), and should produce in the clerk of the peace a certificate of qualification from such Board of Examiners one week before an election of any such surveyor. And that every surveyor hereafter appointed should make a declaration of official fidelity, to be administered by the justices in their General Quarter Sessions, before any such surveyor should be competent to act.

4. That, in case of any vacancy by death or removal, the justices should, within one month, at their General Quarter Sessions, or an adjournment thereof, appoint a successor (s. 74); and that in the meantime the official referees appointed under the Act might appoint a competent person to perform the duties of the vacant district; and that such official referees (s. 75) may also represent to the justices any opinion they may form that a district is too extensive for any surveyor, and may appoint a competent person to assist any surveyor who cannot promptly and efficiently discharge the duties of his office. And,

5. That an appellate jurisdiction (s. 57) is given to the justices for the county of Middlesex and for the city and liberties of Westminster, at their Quarter Sessions respectively, as to certain convictions affecting nuisances situate within their respective county or city and liberties.

To these provisions of the new Metropolitan Building-Act your Committee have referred, that their proceedings and opinions may be rendered more generally intelligible to the Court. And they would therefore also state, that some difficulties were presented by the provisions of "The New Act (7 & 8 Vict. c. 71) for the better Administration of Criminal Justice in Middlesex," and which passed three days before the former mentioned Act. These difficulties were, that, by the 11th section of the Middlesex Act, it is provided that Sessions of the Peace in and for the city and liberty of Westminster should cease to be holden, and the Sessions to be held in and for the county of Middlesex; mentioned in the 2nd section, should be holden by adjournment within the said city and liberty, and should have full jurisdiction over all things cognizable by the Sessions for the said city and liberty; while, by the 57th section of the Metropolitan Building-Act (and which passed after the Middlesex Act), appeals as to premises in the city and liberties of Westminster are to be heard at the Quarter Sessions thereof; and, by the 64th section, the justices for the city and liberties of Westminster, at their General Quarter Sessions, or any adjournment thereof, are to appoint the districts to which the places in that jurisdiction should belong, and unite, enlarge, and vary the same, and, by the 65th section, are to nominate and appoint the district surveyors—and which occasioned doubts as to the course which the Middlesex magistrates might hereafter take as to the places within the city and liberties of Westminster, and the appointment of surveyors for those places. But as, with respect to those doubts, your Committee have been favoured with the opinion of *The Registrar of Buildings* under the Metropolitan Building-Act, and of the *legal adviser* of the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, "That the magistrates for Middlesex sitting by adjournment at Westminster